DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 795 CS 009 545

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Spelling in the Curriculum.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Spelling; *Spelling Instruction; Teaching Methods; Word Lists
IDENTIFIERS *Educational Issues; Spelling Reform

ABSTRACT

Diverse issues in the spelling curriculum must be resolved. One issue in spelling involves whether students learn to spell words better from a list or within the framework of a practical learning activity. Linguists advocate that words follow a pattern in spelling, yet research studies have been used to select lists of spelling words that may have no patterns in terms of linguistic elements. The selection of spelling words from word lists versus pupil-teacher planning in spelling word selection is a related issue in spelling instruction. Other issues include: (1) use of the sight word method as compared to an emphasis on phonics; (2) intrinsic versus extrinsic means of stimulating student learning; and (3) correlation between subject areas as compared to emphasizing words from separate subjects. A variety of approaches should be utilized in providing for individual differences in spelling. (MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marlow Ediger
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED303795

SPELLING IN THE CURRICULUM

Marlow Ediger

There are diverse issues which need resolving in the spelling curriculum. Each issue is salient in terms of guiding pupils to attain optimally in spelling. Students are individuals and have intrinsic worth. With individual differences as a concept, the classroom teacher needs to identify and implement methods of guiding each learner to do as well as possible in spelling achievement.

Word List Versus Functional Spelling

An important issue in spelling involves students learning to spell words from a list as compared to spelling words correctly within the framework of a practical learning activity.

There are numerous series of spelling textbooks which contain lists of words for each pupil to master on a weekly basis. Within the weekly list of words are experiences for students to pursue in learning to spell the given set of words. Thus, a pupil will need to use words from the weekly list to complete a crossword puzzle correctly. Correct spelling of words is practiced when completing this activity. Or, students need to select the correct word from the spelling list to fill in the blank spaces within a set of sentences. Generally, a variety of opportunities are presented for pupils to practice spelling each word correctly from a list of words contained in the textbook.

When utilizing textbooks containing lists of words for pupils to master in spelling, the teacher needs to be certain that individual differences are adequately provided for in terms of high, average, and slower

CS005545

achievers. The following criteria would assist in doing this:

1. Additional or bonus spelling words need to be emphasized for the more talented learners in spelling.

2. Slow learners should learn to spell a reasonable number of words correctly that can be mastered in a time interval, such as a week.

3. Students need to utilize spelling words from a list in a variety of writing situations to retain the correct spelling of these words.

4. Learners need to understand the meaning of each spelling word and be able to utilize these words correctly in sentences.

5. Correct pronunciation (allowing for dialect differences) of each spelling word is salient. Incorrect pronunciations can make for spelling errors.

6. Learners need to notice linguistic elements within a set of spelling words. The elements or patterns can aid pupils in spelling words correctly, presently as well as when learnings are transferred to new situations.

The functionalist philosophy would advocate the correct spelling of words be utilized in utilitarian situations. Words in spelling are put on a list as they are needed in practical writing situations. In the writing of business and friendly letters, announcements, thank you notes, letters of sympathy and condolescense, and get well cards, students need to learn to spell selected words. These are useful spelling words. Direct communication with others is involved, such as in a business letter that will be mailed to order free materials for an ongoing unit of study in the classroom setting. Politeness and consideration for others is involved when writing the business letter which will be mailed and a response received. The politeness and consideration will, in part, be

reflected within the framework of the correct spelling of words.

In functional approaches in the teaching of spelling, words are mastered as they are needed to communicate with others in writing. The correct spelling of words is instrumental to the actual writing of the business letter. Learning to spell correctly, a given set of words in and of itself is not the goal. Rather, words are spelled correctly to communicate effectively with others.

Barbe, Francis, and Braun[1] wrote:

> Textbooks are not "really necessary" in any subject. They are a convenience to both teachers and students, in much the same way that dimensional lumber is a convenience to a cabinetmaker. Any good woodworker can fell a tree, cut the lumber to size, dry it, and plane it smooth; the process adds tremendously to the project being undertaken, but it can be done. The same is true about textbooks. Any good teacher can start from scratch and develop the materials necessary for spelling, reading, or other school subjects. But is the effort involved worth the benefit that results? In a few cases, yes, but in most cases, the answer is no.
>
> Spelling texts, for all their shortcomings, perform several useful functions. They provide teachers with a basic word list, activities that feature the words, and a structure within which spelling can be taught. Children find many of the games and activities in spelling books motivating, spelling books often provide a link between spelling and other subject areas.

Linguistic Elements Versus Research Studies

Linguists advocate that words follow a pattern in spelling, such as bent, cent, dent, rent, and sent. Even irregularly spelled words sometimes follow a pattern, such as rough, cough, though, through, and thought. The "ent" phonetic element is a pattern in the former, while "ough " is the phonetic element in the latter.

---

[1]Walter Barbie, Azalia S. Francis, and Lois A. Braun, Spelling: Basic Skills for Effective Communication. Columbus, Ohio: Zaner-Bloser, Inc., page 2.

A list of spelling words utilizing linguistic elements may contain one or more of the following:

1. Each singular noun has an "s" or "es" ending making for plural nouns.

2. Each adjective has an "er" or "est" ending making for the comparative and superlative degrees sequentially.

Research studies to select a given list of spelling words may have no patterns in terms of linguistic elements. Rather, those words that pupils utilize most frequently in a variety of purposes in writing become a list for students to master. The emphasis here is upon useful words. Through research in a quality study, the researcher can determine which are the 100 most useful words for students to master in spelling. Or, a good researcher can ascertain on which individual grade levels are the fifty most useful spelling words for students to acquire. Utilitarian concerns are significant when words from research studies are emphasized for mastery learning by students.

Word Lists Versus Pupil - Teacher Planning

Selecting words for pupils to master may come from sequential lists contained in reputable spelling textbooks or from research studies. This approach can be compared with pupil - teacher planning in using the contract system. With pupils involved in choosing words they wish to master within a time cycle, such as five days, purpose or reasons for learning are involved. Hopefully, spelling words for mastery learning will be selected on the basis of being purposeful, interesting, and challenging. The pupil will and should perceive reasons for achieving. No doubt, each

pupil has inherent reasons for desiring to study the correct spelling of a given set of words. The due date and signatures of both the pupil and the teacher should appear on the contract.

A motivating factor for the student is to complete the correct spelling of each word on the contract by the due date.

Decision-making goals are also involved when teacher-pupil planning is stressed in selecting spelling words for the latter to master.

Sight Word Versus Phonics Instruction

> The time and effort spent on readiness activities in preschools, kindergartens, and first grades is generally directed toward the reading program, but a similar level of readiness should be fostered toward writing - and spelling. Of course, the ability to recognize some words - a major step in learning to read - is an ability also important to spelling. A child who looks at ball and tall and does not see that "b" and "t" are different letters is going to have difficulty in both reading and spelling. The one who cannot hear the differences in the way these words are spoken may likewise have difficulty.
>
> Readiness for spelling, like readiness for reading or any other school subject, differs with individuals. Children at any age level are at various stages in development in the ability to express themselves orally and graphically. They also differ in receptive language ability. All of these differences are especially noticeable among children in preschool, kindergarten, or first grade - although, in actuality, the differences are likely to become greater later. In all cases, however, to foster the development of each child, recognition must be given to differences and plans for learning made accordingly.[2]

Both the whole word (sight method) and utilizing phonetic analysis is involved in learning to spell words correctly. The issue appears, to which extent should either approach be used by learners in learning to spell words correctly.

---

[2]Walter T. Petty, Dorthy C. Petty, and Marjorie F. Becking, Experiences in Language. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1985, page 251.

There are approximately 12 per cent of English sounds in words which are nonphonetic. Words such as cough, rough, through, one, once, and doubt lack consistency in degrees between phonemes and graphemes. Nonphonetic elements in learning to spell words will need to be learned by the sight method. The whole word or configuration clues must be used by the student to identify and learn to spell correctly irrationally spelled words.

A variety of experiences may be used in learning to spell nonphonetic words correctly. Drill and practice activities are helpful in that the learner must look at the word carefully and then practice writing that word. The learner needs to be careful to spell the word correctly and not practice what is incorrect. The irrational word may be practiced in spelling words correctly within the framework of functional writing situations, such as the writing of business letters, friendly letters, announcements, thank you letters, poems, plays, and notes of sympathy.

In rationally spelled words or word elements, pupils need to look at the new spelling word carefully to notice shape, form, and proportion. The learner then needs to pronounce the word correctly and listen to specific sounds. Individual sounds must be associated with one or more graphemes or symbols. The learner should write the new spelling word once only. Checking the written word with the correctly spelled word is important at this point. A pupil should not practice what is incorrect. After careful examination to notice if he/she spelled the word correctly, additional practice should occur in which the new word is spelled correctly. The correct spelling of the new word may also be practiced in functional writing situations until the mastery level has occured.

An issue then is involved in determining to what degree configuration clues (sight word method) as compared to phonics should be utilized by students in spelling new words correctly.

Stewig[3] wrote:

> Many children spell poorly because they listen inaccurately to the speech of others. In social situations and in weekly spelling lessons, these children listen inattentively. Thus, they do not hear correctly and when confronted with a word in a spelling list, may spell it as they have heard it. For example, if a child listens inattentively, he or she may spell probly instead of probably. Similarly, the child who writes reconize may not be hearing the /g/ sound in the middle of the word. Spelling problems caused by poor listening habits show up when children omit syllables, drop endings, and reverse syllables or letter order. More practice in listening may well result in better spelling.
>
> Students who listen poorly to others may also listen poorly to their own speech. For example, someone may say umbrella, but hearing the word inaccurately, the child may add a syllable, resulting in umberella. This also leads to spelling problems. Sessions designed to improve listening habits should be accompanied by increased attention to the accuracy of a child's oral pronunciation.

Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Motivation

How should students be rewarded for achievement in spelling? Toward one end of the continuum, language arts specialists advocate learning has its own reward. Thus, to spell words correctly from a list and/or in functional writing situations is intrinsically its very own reward. From within, the student perceives that learning is worthwhile, good, and rewarding. No prizes or tokens need to be given to encourage optimal student achievement. The student is rewarded due to perceiving the correct spelling of words is its very own reward. Intrinsic motivation is then in evidence.

---

[3]John Warren Stewig, Exploring Language Arts in the Elementary School. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983, page 329.

At the other end of the continuum, behaviorism as a school of psychology, emphasizes the use of extrinsic motivational devices to encourage and stimulate pupil mastery of correct spelling of words. Rewards are based upon achievement in measurable results. A certain number of words needs to be mastered within a time interval such as a week to secure a prize. Prizes may consist of candy, pictures, certificates, and badges inexpensively made from scrap pieces of cloth. Primary reinforces are then being utilized. Secondary reinforcers may consist of tokens given for spelling a certain number of words correctly. The tokens can then be exchanged for prizes at specific times, such as Friday afternoons.

In spelling words correctly, behaviorists generally would recommend a fixed ratio interval, such as a primary or secondary reinforcer being given for each set of forty words mastered in spelling. A varied ratio approach may not be as acceptable, such as a prize or token given for twenty, twenty-five, or thirty words spelled correctly. Varied ratios could be effective if pupils in each succeeding week can master an increased number of spelling words per week.

An issue is then involved pertaining to intrinsic (learning is its own reward) as compared to extrinsic motivation (rewards and prizes given for demonstrated achievement of learners) in the spelling curriculum.

Correlation of Spelling in the Curriculum

Correlation in the curriculum is a useful concept. To what extent should correct spelling of words be emphasized in each academic area, such as reading and the language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics? Educational psychologists have long advocated that subject mat-

ter is related and not in isolation from knowledge in general. Spelling may then be emphasized in diverse units of study in the curriculum. Rubin[4] wrote:

> The allotment of time for formal spelling lessons should not be more than 15 minutes a day, or 75 minutes a week. With an increase of subject matter in the curriculum at the elementary-school level, the justification for more time is not warranted. However, during the school day there are many opportunities for incidental learning in spelling and the teacher should take advantages of these. Spelling is related not only to many other language arts areas but to other areas of the curriculum as well.

Words in spelling chosen from diverse academic areas should be significant. These are salient words for students to learn to spell. Purpose is involved for learning to spell words correctly that come from ongoing units of study. Students then perceive reasons for learning to spell words correctly. A higher energy level occurs on the part of the learners if significance and purpose become important concepts in teaching and learning. Also students, should utilize the unit words in creative and functional writing. Too frequently, students have studied the correct spelling of a set of words and not perceived the relationship between learning to spell and utilizing what has been acquired in terms of new learnings.

There are selected problems involved in choosing spelling words from a unit of study involving any curriculum area. These problems are:

1. Trivia is represented in learning to spell words that come from units.

2. Learners are asked to study the correct spelling of too many new words which include unit words as well as those coming from spelling textbooks.

---

[4]Dorthy Rubin, Teaching Elementary Language Arts, Third Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1985, page 266.

3. Unusual words are selected for student mastery. These words are not needed by pupils in diverse writing situations.

4. A lack of stimulating learning activities are in evidence. There is no textbook used that provides suggestions for learning activities. Rather, the teacher needs to develop his/her very own learning activities to guide students to spell words correctly.

5. Few opportunities exist for follow-up experiences as the weeks and months go by. Little emphasize then is placed upon students meeting up with these new unit words again in a spiral curriculum.

In Conclusion

There are issues in the spelling curriculum which need resolving. These issues include :

1. Pupils studying spelling words from lists versus functional approaches in mastering correct spelling of words.

2. Linguistic elements as compared to words coming from research studies in emphasizing correctness in the spelling of words.

3. Word lists versus pupil-teacher planning in selecting spelling words for mastery learning.

4. Sight words as compared to phonics emphasis as methods to utilize in learning to spell words correctly.

5. Intrinsic versus extrinsic means of stimulating student learning.

6. Correlation as compared to the separate subjects curriculum being emphasized in spelling.

Perhaps, a variety of approaches need to be utilized in providing for individual differences in spelling. Students individually need to achieve optimally in learning to spell words correctly.

Bibliography

Rubin, Dorthy. Teaching Elementary Language Arts, Third Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985.

Stewig, John Warren. Exploring Language Arts in the Elementary School. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983.

Barbe, Walter; Azalia S. Francis and Lois A. Braun. Spelling: Basic Skills for Effective Communication. Columbus, Ohio: Zaner-Bloser, Inc.

Petty, Walter T.; Dorthy C. Petty and Marjorie F. Becking. Experiences in Language. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1985.